

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and following remarks, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-9, 11-16 and 18-20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, Claims 1, 4, 7 and 14 are amended; Claims 10 and 17 are canceled; and no claims are added herewith. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by this Amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 7-13 were objected to for informalities; Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,799,011 B2 to Abe in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,801,742 B1 to Mochimaru; Claims 7-9 and 14-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,233,427 B1 to Hirota in view of JP 2002-14555; and Claims 10-13 and 17-20 were indicated as including allowable subject matter.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner indicating allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Claims 7 and 14 have been amended to include the allowable features of Claims 10 and 17 respectively. Therefore, Claims 7 and 14, and the respective dependent claims, are in condition for allowance.

Applicants respectfully assert that October 30, 2006 amendments to the specification comply with the requirements of 37 CFR 1.121. For example, the amendment to the paragraph from page 22 line 11 to page 23 line 7, the paragraph is replaced and the changes are shown with a strike through and underlining as shown in lines 4 and 5 of the paragraph.

With respect to the objection to Claims 7-13, Claim 7 is amended by the present amendment. Withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 7-13 is respectfully requested.

With respect to the rejection of Claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Abe in view of Mochimaru, this rejection is respectfully traversed. To the extent that Mochimaru qualifies as a reference under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) and therefore 35 U.S.C. § 103,

Applicants respectfully submit that Mochimaru and the present application were commonly assigned to the assignee of the present application at the time the claimed invention was made. Accordingly, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(c), Mochimaru does not qualify as a reference under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

STATEMENT CONCERNING COMMON OWNERSHIP

Applicant respectfully submits that the subject matter of Mochimaru and the claimed subject matter of the present invention were, at the time the present invention was made, owned by the same person or subject to an obligation of assignment to the same person.

MPEP § 706(I)(2) states:

The following statement is sufficient evidence to establish common ownership of, or an obligation for assignment to, the same person(s) or organization(s):

Applicants and references (whether patents, patent applications, patent application publications, etc.) will be considered by the examiner to be owned by, or subject to an obligation of assignment to the same person, at the time invention was made, if the applicant(s) or an attorney of agent of record makes a statement to the effect that the application and the reference were, at the time the invention was made, owned by, or subject to an obligation of assignment to, the same person.

See "Guidelines Setting Forth a Modified Policy Concerning the Evidence of Common Ownership, or an Obligation of Assignment to the Same Person, as Required by 35 U.S.C. 103(c)," 1241 O.G. 96 (December 26, 2000).¹

Accordingly, in light of the statement and guidelines above, Applicant respectfully submits that Mochimaru is disqualified as a §103 reference against any of the claims in the present application. Therefore, the rejection of Claims 1-6 as obvious over Abe in view of Mochimaru is overcome. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Abe in view of Mochimaru is respectfully requested.

¹ MPEP § 706.02(I)(2)II.

With respect to the rejection of Claims 7-9 and 14-16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Hirota in view of JP 2002-14555, this rejection is respectfully traversed. Specifically, the applied art does not teach or suggest a front-side plate frame provided along an entire periphery of a front-side opening of an image forming part, as recited in Claim 7 and similarly recited in Claim 14.

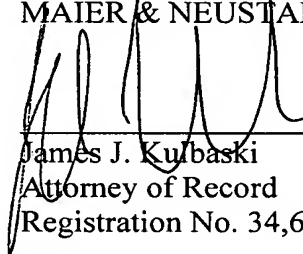
JP 2002-14555 merely discloses the removable unit includes holes 16a and 17a in the frame member and includes pins 36a and 37a to connect the unit to the image forming apparatus. However, independent Claims 7 and 14 recite that the front-side plate frame is provided along an entire periphery of a front-side opening of the image forming part. This feature is not shown in the applied art. The front-side plate frame of the claimed invention is best shown in Figures 3 and 5 of the present application. Hirota does not make up for the deficiencies of JP 2002-14555 discussed above. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Hirota and JP 2002-14555 is respectfully requested.

Consequently, for the reasons discussed in detail above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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